



City of San Diego
Development Services Department
Plan Review Division
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Building Newsletter 84-1

Swimming Pool Requirements

Interpretations of State and Local Building Codes
San Diego Municipal Code, Chapter IX, Article 1, Division 84
Revision Date: January 1996

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This building newsletter has been revised in its entirety and supersedes all previous versions including those dated in 1990 through 1994.

I. Definitions

The provisions of this Building Newsletter apply to private swimming pools, spas and hot tubs located on the premises of Group R, Division 3 Occupancies. A private swimming pool is defined in Section 91.8402 of the San Diego Municipal Code (SDMC) as "any structure intended for swimming or recreational bathing that can contain water over 24 inches in depth. This includes in-ground, above-ground and on-ground swimming pools, hot tubs and spas."

II. Barrier Requirements

Section 91.8403 of the (SDMC) requires that every outdoor swimming pool be enclosed by a barrier meeting the following requirements:

- A. The top of the barrier shall be at least sixty (60) inches above grade measured on the side of the barrier which faces away from the swimming pool and shall be constructed to withstand the forces contained in the Building Code. The maximum vertical clearance between grade and the bottom of the barrier shall be four (4) inches measured to a hard surface such as concrete or two (2) inches measured to earth. This measurement shall be taken on the side of the barrier which faces away from the swimming pool. Where the top of the swimming pool is above grade, such as an aboveground pool, the barrier may be the pool's structure itself, or mounted on top of the pool structure. Where the barrier is mounted on top of the pool structure, the maximum vertical clearance between the top of the pool structure and the bottom of the barrier shall be four (4) inches. Note that no barrier, gate or other protective device may be installed in such a way as to interfere with exiting from any building or occupancy (Section 91.8404, SDMC).
- B. Openings in the barrier shall not allow passage of a four (4) inch diameter sphere.
- C. Solid barriers which do not have openings, such as masonry or stone walls, shall not contain indentations or protrusions except for tooled masonry joints.
- D. Where the barrier is composed of horizontal and vertical members and the distance between the tops of the horizontal members is less than forty-five (45) inches, the horizontal members shall be located on the swimming pool side of the fence. Spacing between

vertical members shall not exceed two (2) inches in width. Where there are decorative cutouts within vertical members, spacing within the cutouts shall not exceed two (2) inches in width.

- E. Where the barrier is composed of horizontal and vertical members and the distance between the tops of the horizontal members is forty-five (45) inches or more, spacing between vertical members shall not exceed four (4) inches. Where there are decorative cutouts within vertical members, spacing within the cutouts shall not exceed two (2) inches in width.
- F. Maximum mesh size for chain link fences shall be a two-inch square. The chain link wire size shall not be less than 11- $\frac{1}{2}$ gauge.
- G. Where the barrier is composed of diagonal members, such as a lattice fence, the maximum opening formed by the diagonal members shall be no more than two (2) inches.
- H. Hot tubs and spas located outdoors and not exceeding sixty-four (64) square feet may have rigid pool covers equipped with a permanent locking and latching device in lieu of the barrier required by this Division.
- I. When an enclosing barrier would be located in a required front yard setback or street side yard, a zoning variance must be obtained before a building permit for the swimming pool can be issued.

III. Access

A. Access gates shall comply with the requirements of Section II above, and shall be equipped to accommodate a locking device no less than 54 inches above grade. Pedestrian-access gates shall open outward away from the pool and shall be self-closing and have a self-latching device. Gates other than pedestrian access gates shall comply with the requirements of Section II above, and shall be equipped with a locking device.

B. Where an aboveground pool structure is used as a barrier or where the barrier is mounted on top of the pool structure, and the means of access is a ladder or steps, then:

- 1. the ladder or steps shall be capable of being secured, locked or removed to prevent access; or,
- 2. the ladder or steps shall be surrounded by a barrier which meets the requirements of Section II above.

When the ladder or steps are secured, locked or removed, any opening created shall not allow the passage of a four (4) inch diameter sphere.

IV. Alternative Barrier Requirements

Where unusual circumstances exist that make strict enforcement of this Division impractical, the Building official may grant modifications for individual cases per Section 104.2.7 of the Uniform Building Code, 1994 Edition.

V. Yard Requirements

A. Yard requirements for swimming pools (SDMC Section 91.8405) are as follows:

1. If the pool projects three feet or less above grade, a three-foot minimum front, side and rear yard must be observed.
2. If the pool projects more than three feet above grade, a four-foot minimum rear yard must be observed with front and side yards as specified in Article 1, Chapter X of the SDMC for the zone in which the pool is located, but in no case less than three feet.

B. Yard requirements for accessory equipment (SDMC Section 91.8405, Uniform Mechanical Code Section 806) are as follows:

1. All heating, filtering, pumping and accessory equipment located entirely below grade and provided with a permanent, durable, protective covering need not observe front, side or rear yard requirements.
2. All other heating, filtering, pumping and accessory equipment must observe a four-foot minimum side and rear yard requirement.

3. Venting systems must observe a four-foot minimum front, side and rear yard requirement except when adjoining a public way.

4. All heating, filtering, pumping and accessory equipment located entirely within an existing building conforming to Section 101.0601(4) of the SDMC need not observe front, side or rear yard requirements.

VI. Plans

All plot plans submitted with permit applications for swimming pools must clearly indicate:

- A. Maximum exterior dimensions of the swimming pool.
- B. Distance from the edge of the swimming pool to all adjacent structures, embankments and property lines.
- C. Location of all swimming pool service equipment, including distance to property line.
- D. Location and depth of the deep and shallow ends of the swimming pool.
- E. Location, extent, and height of all barriers.
- F. Direction of swing of access gates and labeling of any self-closing/self-latching gates.

VII. Public Swimming Pools

Public swimming pools are regulated by Chapter 31B of the 1995 California Building Code (Title 24, Part 2, of the California Code of Regulations).